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S E C R E T AMMAN 006171

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NOFORN

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TAGS: PREL IZ JO

SUBJECT: JAF VICE CHIEF OF STAFF CRITICIZES SYRIA

REF: AMMAN 2735

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b), (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: JAF Vice Chief of Staff General Saud Nsairat alleged that Syrian border officials are not putting forth a sincere effort to stop illegal border crossers and weapons from entering Jordan. Nsairat said Jordan needed a large x-ray machine to inspect vehicles entering Jordan through the free trade zone at the Jaber border crossing. He also said that Jordan's efforts to negotiate with Syria over creeping Syrian accretion of Jordanian territory had gone nowhere.  
End Summary.

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SYRIAN BORDER PROBLEMS  
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¶2. (C) In a meeting with PM A/S Bloomfield, Charge, DATT, and PolMilOff July 19, Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) Vice Chief of Staff Saud Nsairat alleged that Syrian border officials are doing nothing to prevent insurgents and weapons from entering Jordan, and said the quality and quantity of smuggled arms and materiel had increased recently. Without providing details, Nsairat told Bloomfield that at 0630 local time July 19 Jordanian border security captured an illegal border crosser near Umm Qais. (Note: On July 19, local media reported that a Jordanian border patrol intercepted four armed men trying to infiltrate the border into Israel from the Wakkas region in northern Jordan. According to the report, the Jordan patrol killed three and captured the fourth. Septel will provide more detail.) Nsairat cited alleged illegal border crossings and Jordanian fears of vehicles carrying weapons and/or explosives as justifying the need for a large x-ray machine to inspect vehicles entering Jordan through the free trade zone at the Jaber border with Syria.

¶3. (C) When asked if he thought Syria had a policy of encouraging infiltrators, Nsairat said the Syrian government was not actively trying to stop them, and "to some extent" were allowing it. He believed that the Syrian border security forces could stop illegal crossings if they wanted to; they certainly can on their own border with Israel. However, border security officials were corrupt and could be bribed to ignore transgressors. There were alleged instances of "undetected" individuals crossing within 100 meters of Syrian border posts. He also alleged there were instances in which infiltrators used donkeys loaded with weapons to test the reaction of Jordanian border security while waiting on the Syrian side.

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BILATERAL BORDER DEMARCACTION COMMITTEE  
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¶4. (C) Nsairat said that Jordan was still in negotiations with Syria to discuss two or three Syrian border outposts that Jordan believes are inside Jordan territory. Nsairat said Jordan's head of Military Intelligence, Brigadier General Reda al Btoosh, went to Damascus a few days ago as a follow up to earlier Prime Minister-level discussions to iron out border demarcation issues (ref A). Separately, Jordan Royal Court Minister Samir al-Rifai, told Charge July 18 that no progress had been made during the visit.

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COMMENT  
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¶5. (S) Nsairat's comments to A/S Bloomfield are not entirely consistent with other recent comments from the King and Foreign Minister. Septel will provide fuller analysis of Syria-Jordan security issues.

¶6. (U) A/S Bloomfield did not have the opportunity to clear this cable.

¶7. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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